

## Suffering

Mira Mehta

### Eye Contact with Reality

Stand resolute and dare  
To look reality in the eye;  
Do not shade yours  
Or avert your gaze,  
Or let dreams  
Becloud your vision,  
Or use a tinted or distorting lens,  
Or hide behind a veil  
From its glare:

And that stern eye,  
Encountering yours,  
Will indicate by glances  
Sidelong or direct,  
And then, outstared,  
By winks and twinkling  
The clear, sure road  
On which your sight is set  
And smile.

Suffering is part and parcel of the experience of living. It is defined in the Yoga literature as that which all creatures seek to avoid, and it gives rise to aversion (*dvesha*), one of the afflictions (*kleshas*) of which the mind is composed.<sup>1</sup>

Fully acknowledging the painful reality of existence, Yoga is optimistic with regard to the removal of future pain. "A remedy is known for every avoidable cause of pain<sup>2</sup>", asserts Vyasa, the author of the authoritative commentary on Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms.

Vyasa gives the example of a thorn pricking the foot; avoidance of this pain lies in not treading on the thorn or in wearing shoes. The solution begins with knowledge: that a thorn can prick and that a foot can be pricked. Applying this knowledge furnishes the remedy.

Similarly, facing other hurtful situations with understanding and realising one's areas of vulnerability enable one to contrive the cure. However thorny the path of life, protective means can be found.

<sup>1</sup>Yoga Sutra 2.8

<sup>2</sup>Commentary on Yoga Sutra 2.17

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The poem is taken from Mira Mehta's book *Cascade of Stars*, published by Shephard-Walwyn ([www.shephard-walwyn.co.uk](http://www.shephard-walwyn.co.uk)). For information about her classes and other publications visit [www.yogicpath.com](http://www.yogicpath.com).